Experiment 64: Homemade Napalm with Household Materials

A while ago, I saw a neat YouTube video on making napalm from Styrofoam and gasoline. Making napalm is as easy as pushing Styrofoam into gasoline until it won't dissolve anymore. I waited until I got a large block of Styrofoam from an appliance box and then tried making napalm in my own backyard. :)

The Styrofoam dissolved surprisingly quickly, and it tripled the volume of the gasoline. I only used about 10mL of gasoline, but that was plenty to make a good volume of napalm. It had a consistency like silly putty, and it was very stretchy. While saturated with gasoline, the napalm was slippery, but when it dried just a bit, it became tenaciously sticky.

I split my napalm into three blobs and lit one on an overturned paint can. For its villainous reputation, napalm really isn't that interesting. It just burns... and burns and burns and burns. Each small chunk of napalm burned for over four minutes.

While the napalm itself wasn't super exciting, it did provide a neat photo opportunity. I used my Nikon 1 J1 in manual mode to capture some really neat images of the flames. The photos were all underexposed slightly to make the fire stand out, and I used a fast shutter speed to ensure sharp detail in the flames and toxic black smoke. I took a lot of pictures as the napalm burned and then picked the best ones; at times, the flames had very beautiful contours. Although napalm may be unexciting as far as fireballs go, it certainly provides a good subject for the amateur photographer.